For whom we owe.

Chapter 1: The missing child.

On one brutal winter night in rural Alaska, a girl used every bit of remaining strength to continue walking to a faint light in the distance through the unforgiving frost. Her body and mind fought to choose her direction as she painfully inched closer to the light. The pain in her body made every step feel like ten but her brain refused to lie down in the snow and die. As she got closer a large and inviting cottage came into her view. In an act of nature's mercy it's residents were still awake even in the advanced hour.

The girl came into their view and one of residents, an elderly woman noticed the her walking in the snow. The old woman's eyes went wide and she rushed to find her husband. "Oh my god, Jacob! Someone's outside!" The old man who was sitting lazily sprung to life seeing his wife's panicked face and she brought him to the window to see the stranger. As the girl slowly made her way to the cottage's front door the couple could see her face. The girl's face was black and blue and crimson splotches dotted most of her attire. Weakly, the girl knocked softly on the door and when they saw her condition they didn't hesitate to open the door. But the girl at the door only could only manage a few words before exhaustion took over. "Auntie eve? help" the girl fell over but Jacob caught her before she could hit the floor. "How does she know your name Evelyn" he asks his wife as they escort the girl inside. "I'm not sure, but we'll just ask her when she comes to" she replied as she carefully placed the girl on the couch.

Evelyn's heartbreak spurred her into action and she began to tend to the girl. She removed her blood stained clothes and did her best to disinfect and bandage the scratches and cuts covering her body. Jacob didn't waste time getting the ambulance on the phone. "The fastest they can be here is between two and two and a half hours" he told Evelyn. She nodded and began to light the fireplace. As its gentle flame came to light the girl's eyes opened slightly but she remained half asleep. Evelyn began to dress her in a fresh pair of clothes and she slowly spoke again. "Auntie Eve? what are you…" she stopped, not knowing how to finished her sentence. The girl drifted back to sleep and the couple spent an agonizing two hours waiting for an ambulance to arrive. When Evelyn would look over at the girl she couldn't help but tear up, she looked very similar to her own daughter and Evelyn was terrified just looking at her condition. She began to cry after only a few minutes of waiting and Jacob sent his distraught wife to the bedroom and took over sitting with the girl till the ambulance arrived.

After a while the paramedics showed up with a police officer. While the paramedics inspected the girl, Jacob spoke to the officer about how she came in. Luck was on the girl's side health wise and the paramedics declared that she showed no signs of serious any damage and wouldn't require hospitalization her cuts were not deep and only needed bandages and she had signs of minor superficial frostbite. The couple breathed a sigh of relief at the news but one problem still remained, Identifying the girl.

On the advice of the paramedics Evelyn brought the girl into a warm bath. She had started to come to from the combination being examined by paramedics and the talking around the house. The officer gently knocked on the bathroom door. "Ma'am? do you know the identity of the girl?" The officer asked her. "No, she still hasn't told us anything yet" Evelyn replied. "There's something I gotta

show you ma'am." He replied. Evelyn stepped out of the bathroom and the officer handed her a missing person's flier. "This is your niece correct?" He asked her. Evelyn looked at the flier, and realized it was the same flier she had on her wall for a few years now. ***Diana Chernov. 9 years old. Pale skin. Dark brown eyes and dark brown hair. Last seen in Valdez Alaska at the port. Date reported missing: February 11th 2019 at 5:34pm.** Evelyn's eyes went wide. *"Oh, yes that's my niece! she went missing 7 years ago, hopefully if she's still alive she'd be around sixteen by now and my poor sister would be able to sleep at night again. Wait... sixteen?"* Evelyn quickly rushed back to the bathroom and joined by the girl's side once again. She looked at the poster and back at the girl again and again, the girl was clearly a teenager, Around somewhere from about fifteen to eighteen Evelyn guessed. Her eyes and hair both matched the girl on flier and Evelyn thought back to why the girl reminded her of her own daughter. By this point the girl was finally fully awake and relaxed in the tub. *"Diana?"* Evelyn said carefully while looking at the girl. *"Yes auntie eve?"*. She replied. Evelyn's jaw dropped. *"Oh my God, JACOB, IT'S DIANA, SHE'S ALIVE, oh good lord. where in earth have you been child? What happened to you?"* Evelyn held Diana in her arms and cradled her head to her chest unbothered by her clothes getting wet and started to sob uncontrollably. *"Oh Diana, you're safe now baby, I'm here. Auntie eve is right here darling"* she gently told her. After her aunt's hug Diana craned her head all around the room as if she was looking for something. She slowly stood up out of the tub and with Evelyn's help she came out. Although she was confused at Diana's behavior she still passed her a towel. She took a few minutes to dry up while Evelyn left to tell Jacob and the officer the news and make food for Diana. Evelyn came back with a spare nightgown for Diana and she finally emerged from the bathroom. As she left the bathroom the officer stared at Diana and the poster. *"Are you Diana Chernov?"* the police officer asked her. She nodded and he summoned her into another room out of earshot of her aunt and uncle and quietly asked. *"Are these two responsible for the condition you're in Diana?"* she took her head no. *"Who is then?"* he continued. She looked up at the officer for a split second but her eyes began to wander away and her head joined in, she remained silent as if lost in thought. *"Do you remember how you went missing? Did someone take you?"* again she remained silent. *"Diana, if someone took you we need to know okay?, this person could take other kids"* she looked back up at the officer and mumbled *"That's not going to happen."* she told him. The puzzled look on his face prompted her reply. "*He's in hell now.*" the officer look of concern turned into a one of confusion and he sighed. *"Look, Diana. I'm going to call your folks and let them know you're still kicking okay?. Come to the police department in the morning and tell us everything. Stay safe, okay?"*

They went back in the living room and Diana sat down at the dining table where Evelyn had set down food for her. Although the whole room looked in her direction, Diana was much more preoccupied with the food in front of her. A plate of reheated beef stroganoff. While Evelyn hoped she wouldn't take offense to being served leftovers, she was surprised when Diana had dug in without a second thought. She ate with her hands, completely unbothered by the mess and scarfed the meal down carefully but quickly as if it would disappear at any moment. The officer told the two his plans and with hesitation left for the night.

Evelyn was overwhelmed by the days events and excused herself to her room. “I need some time Jacob, can you set Diana up in the guestroom?” he nodded and escorted Diana into a spare room. Diana was asleep in seconds, Evelyn was asleep in seconds the lights were off for the night and the house went quiet. But as he laid next to his wife Jacob couldn’t fall asleep, the front he had been putting up to hide his pain from his wife collapsed and he finally allowed himself to cry. He didn’t want to worry her, but now she was asleep, and he allowed himself to cry. He carefully got up several times during the night to check on Diana and watched her until he saw her chest rise and fall enough times to be sure that she was still breathing. After awhile the stress finally drained his energy and he fell asleep too.

The next morning a household in Valdez is woken up by a phone call. The drowsy husband and wife squirm around slowly on their bed as the husband looks at phone. Through it’s dim light he reads who the caller is, It was the police department. He spared no time in picking up. “*Good morning again Mr, Chernov. It’s Greg again from the PD”* the phone says. *“Oh, hi. What’s with the formalities Greg?.”* he responds half awake. *“Well Alex, we need you to come down to the PD as quickly as you can, a big development just happened in your case. don’t worry it’s not another person who heard a rumor around town or some other nonsense.”* Greg replied. *“Well what happened then?”* Alex asks *“Your sister in law came in today with girl matching Diana’s description. But the thing is, we can’t promise that she’s one hundred percent Diana. you know that already, but we’re just asking you to take a look is all”* Greg announced. Alex was shocked and having heard the conversation his wife was now as awake as he was. *“Sofia, I’m going down to the PD, sit tight here till I come back please?”* Alex asked his wife. *“What? No! It’s her for sure! She’s alive she has to be alive, I’m not staying anywhere!”* she fired off. *“Sofia we don’t know anything yet, okay? Just chill here for awhile, I’ll go look. But we can’t…”* he was interrupted by the hysterical Sofia. *“How many missing kids have you ever heard of in this town Alex! It’s her! It’s her! It has to be!”* she screamed. Her face was red and her tears covered her face. She began to breathe heavy and bawl uncontrollably. *“You don’t believe me Alex do you? you never did. You think she’s dead! You just wouldn’t say it!”* Alex brought her into a hug and shushed her as he gently brushed her back. *“Honey, I don’t know or think anything. I’m going to the PD, take a few deep breathes okay?.Why don’t you wait in her room till I come back?”* Sofia looked up at Alex. *“Her room! The bed is going to be to small! We need to buy a bigger one! The furniture is probably dusty again! Are the windows clean? Where are her stuffed animals?”* Sofia continued to think out loud question after question as she made her way to Diana’s room. Alex grabbed his keys put Diana’s little plush fox in his jacket pocket and headed out. While he walked through the living room to the door the realization struck him that compared to how it was before Diana’s disappearance, the living room looked so decrepit and lifeless. The evidence of years of mental anguish were present in not just the living room but most of the house as it’s condition became increasingly worse and less maintained.

During the drive over to the PD Alex was preoccupied with the events of the last seven years. He saw again himself reach for a drink countless times and the day that habit had gotten him fired from his Job. He saw his wife cleaning Diana’s room obsessively over and over and sitting on the tiny bed crying for

hours. He saw his mother on her deathbed weep that she would die without ever knowing that all of her grandchildren were safe. He saw the nights he would sit on the porch with Sofia staring into the distance with her as they wait for a miracle. All the back and forth with the PD, and Greg who chased every lead he could and paid for private investigators out of his own pocket when their usual detectives repeatedly failed to find any new leads. Could the years of suffering, grasping at straws and feeling guilt over looking away for a minutes finally be over? Alex thought.

He walked into same PD he had again and again for years. Greg met him at the door and Alex followed him to an interrogation room. *"We've tried to ask her what happened all morning but she just gives us vague answers or avoids the question. Don't get your hopes up too high Alex, we can't be one hundred percent sure if it's her. She told us your daughter's name is her name but she's been so out of it we don't know if she's telling the truth or thinks she is".* As Alex walked into the room Diana was in the two made eye contact. She said nothing but looked at Alex. The girl that sat on a couch in front of him was from a different world then the nine year child who had gone missing seven years ago. Her dark brown hair dripped down nearly to her waist and her body was slender and muscular in some small parts. Her face carried expression that showed a person who had become apathetic after years of struggle and horror. Alex pulled the little Plush fox out of his jacket pocket and held it out in front of her. *"Misha"* she said as she took the little toy. Alex froze, too shocked to move. The realization forced him to sit down and he steered himself to sit next to Diana. He couldn't contain himself and the tears forced themselves out. *"Do you remember our trip to the Kennecott mines Diana? Do you remember being on my shoulder and watching the clouds most past the mountains with me?"* Diana nodded her head. *"Are you playing mouse Diana?"*she nodded again. Diana hugged her father tightly and cried with him for awhile. *"I'm taking her home. That's my child for sure. Thank you for everything over the years Greg. I owe you more then words can even say. Anything you need Greg just say the word."* Greg finally let out the breath he'd been holding and nodded his approval. "*But what about the investigation? We need to know, the guy could still be out there"* Alex sighed. *"She's gone mouse Greg. That means she's too spooked to talk, give her some time. Me and my wife have been withering away waiting and praying for this moment for seven years. I don't want Sofia to suffer waiting any longer"* Diana and Alex left the PD, after years of being missing Diana was finally heading home.

As the two of them drove home Diana took in all the things that changed about the town, new places, old places that renovated and places that simply didn't exist anymore. *"Diana? Look I know you don't feel like talking about what happened right now, but you have to tell us at some point, okay? It's important. For now though, just talk to us about other things. This whole situation has been a nightmare and I was so sure I'd never see you again. Your mother thought otherwise and I've never been happier to have been wrong."* After they pulled into the driveway Diana stood outside and stared at the house and It was exactly how she remembered, but now the once huge house now felt much smaller and more rundown to her. *"Well, welcome home. Don't keep your mother waiting okay?"* Diana nodded and circled the house curiously looking over every side.

She craned her to stare into the distance and took a few steps back when she saw people. Inside Sofia waited directly at the front entrance to the house, the minute Alex stepped in her eyes begged to hear anything reassuring. Alex looked down at the floor in shame but chuckled slightly. *"Honey I'm so sorry for being so pessimistic about everything, I did think she was dead and I'm so sorry I ever doubted you"* Alex sighed and hugged her tight. Sofia froze but quickly started blasting out questions *"What? What does that mean? Did someone see her? Find they find her? Where is she? Is she hurt? Where did they take her? Who took her?"* Alex simply said nothing and took her hand to lead her outside. He lead her around the house and to the backyard as she continue to fire off more questions. *"Were are you taking me? Why wouldn't you answer me? Alex! What happened? Why are we going to the backya-"* Sofia stopped mid sentence and let out a loud gasp. Diana sat on the old tire swing that now no longer looked so large compared to her anymore. Sofia immediately rushed to her. She burst into tears as she hugged Diana. she cried for joy for finally having Diana back but also cried in pain to see her condition. Through her bawling she barley squeezed out *"Oh god, Diana, what happened to you baby?"* Diana began to cry as well but said nothing and simply returned the hug. The three of them left the backyard and went into he house. Her parents watched with curiosity as Diana entered her room. The first she did when she entered the room was to open the curtains and scan the outside with her eyes. Alex and Sofia looked at each other confused, But Diana closed the curtains again and flopped down on her bed. *"Sorry the bed is so small Diana, we'll get you a new one soon"* Sofia told her. Diana laid in bed on her back and silently started up at the ceiling. Her parents watched her for a few minutes but left the doorway they stood in to go into the room itself, they found her fast asleep on her bed. Alex figured he'd just let her be and he left the room to relax for awhile, but Sofia brought a chair to the room to sit by Diana's bedside and watch over her while she slept. Neither of them had gotten the luxury of at least knowing what dangers Diana had been subject to, but elsewhere the police had much better luck.

After dropping his niece off the PD in the morning to be reunited with her parents, Jacob looked around his property responding to a random gut feeling. He had made mental note the night before when Diana arrived that she had come to the house from the south. With that in mind he walked south until he found exactly what he'd hoping for. Although easy to miss, a footprint trail leading south in the direction of the copper river was visible and even more concerning was a revolver and flashlight that sat abandoned in the snow. Jacob he didn't touch either item but instead called the PD who took the two items as evidence. Jacob theorized to the officers that Diana may have come in from the river and while they were skeptical, the aggravating years of trying to close the cold case meant they were willing to give almost anything a try to close it now that the first major piece had finally been unearthed. During the search of the river police had had doubts, but as the officers went down only a few miles east towards the Wrangell mountains they easily spotted a suspicious boat crashed on the shore in McCarthy. Surprised, they stopped to investigate. While they called out to see if there someone was inside, Greg, who was in the party, took a look through one of the boat's windows and screamed. *"Jesus Christ!"* the rest of the officers immediately turned towards him at looked through the same window.

"*Well at least we don't need a warrant now."* one of them joked. Crimson strands caked the interior and the officers drew straws to figure out who had to go inside. Greg was the unlucky winner. He drew his gun and carefully made his way into the tiny boat. As he looked around he made his announcement *"Police department! Make yourself known! Anyone inside needs to come on ou-. Oh fuck!"* Greg backed up a few steps out of the area near the boat's tiny bedroom and then carefully looked back in. On the bed a machete stood straight up and ran through a man's chest and into the mattress. Blood stained the mattress and the man was completely lifeless. *"We got a body! White dude, probably like twenty to thirty something, with A fucking Machete through the chest!"* Greg went outside to get away from the sight and later the police took the boat in to have forensics analyze it.

From the evidence gathered by the officers, a working theory of events was quickly laid out after three days based on everything they could identify. The first piece was the dead man, Dean. He was a dangerous career criminal who was well known to terrorize small towns in southeast Alaska with his brother Tyler. The two of them were in out of jail very often and were known as "The shotgun brothers" due to them often being removed from places at gunpoint by people trying to protect themselves from the brothers. Their list of alleged and proven crimes read longer than a phone book and the more serious offenses included armed robbery, domestic violence and child abuse.

Dean's body, blood and another blood found at the scene revealed that an extremely violent fight had taken place in the boat. The second blood identified in the boat belonged to Diana. On the boat they also found Dean's cellphone in which contained a text message to his father reading *"Going to river in five to pickup and dispose of the used goods"* With the added context from other messages it suggested that he'd been referring to Diana. The last piece of the puzzle was the revolver. It had two spent ammo casings, but since neither Diana or Dean had been shot and no bullet holes were found in the boat, they reasoned that one of them had tried to shoot the other one either before or after boarding the boat. The theory of events forensics concluded was that at some point Dean got Diana onto his boat where a fight took place between them and Diana was able to overpowered Dean and kill him. Then based on location data from Dean's phone someone drove the boat west towards Diana's aunt and uncle's house in McCarthy, likely Diana herself. Diana then set out on foot after the boat crashed into the side of the river

News spread quickly about the findings of the investigation to many of the people who had hoped for some answers. The police department had told the news that they had a strong belief that Dean had something to do with Diana's disappearance seven years ago, but they did not yet have concrete evidence. Along with that report, the news of the death of one of the infamous shotgun brothers spread quickly as many of their victims celebrated the news.

Chapter 2: The Hometown hero.

Alex found himself laying on the couch during a blizzard, the house was in much better condition and Sofia was peacefully cooking something up in the kitchen. *"Daddy is A polar bear!"* an eight year old Diana shouted at him. She laughed and poked at his stomach. But suddenly Diana's whole body turned completely black. *"Diana?"* Alex carefully called out to her. But the minute he

uttered the words she disappeared.

He woke up with his heart slamming against his chest and covered in sweat in the middle of the night. *“Diana? Diana!”* he shouted repeatedly and his panic summoned her. *“Dad? Why are you screaming?”* Diana asked him. He stopped saying anything when she had come in. He looked at Diana at the side of his bed and Sofia rubbed his back to try to calm him down. The girl in front of him had now spent as much time missing as she’d spent with her family but even after a week since she’d been found it was still hard for him to comprehend the entire ordeal. The tiny sweet little girl Alex knew as his daughter was now two years away from her eighteenth birthday. She was now slightly taller then her mother and surprisingly in really good shape. As he regained his breathe he relaxed a little. *“I’m sorry for waking you both up, all this has just been a lot to take in”* Diana and her mother nodded in agreement. *“We know honey, but we’re a family again. We’ll get through this”* Sofia assured Alex as she hugged him from behind. Diana sat down on the side of the bed next to her Dad and committed to waiting with him till he fully relaxed. He took her hand and held it. *“Jesus kid, your hands are so rough you probably got the grip strength of a gorilla”* Diana giggled and he continued *“you look like one of the people in those survival shows. Did you run off and join one of the first nations?”* he joked. Diana giggled again but gave an answer. *“No. I spent a year hiding out in the Wrangell St Elias and trying to find my way to Auntie Eve’s house. It was hell. It was always so cold and I had to actually hunt for all my food. It’s not as cool or fun as it sounds. I ate so much fish it drove me crazy. I did see park rangers, but I didn’t know who was safe. I thought I would get in trouble for having a gun on me too.”* Alex nodded and having understood her explanation looked at her. His heart sank but he carefully asked the question he’d been dreading the answer to. *“Who were you hiding from? Was it the man they talked about on the news?”* Diana looked down at the floor and let out a deep sigh. *“Yeah, it was him and his brother. They’re the ones that took me when I was little. When I got away from them Tyler ran after me, after about two days he found me and then….”* Diana suddenly paused. She began to tear up and Alex wrapped his arm over Diana to comfort her. Sofia joined their side of the bed and gently held Diana’s hand. *“It’s okay honey, you’re safe. You can tell us anything alright?”* Diana nodded, tears soaked her face as she turned red and let it out. *“After Tyler found me again I used the gun I stole from them, one minute he was furious and the next he looked so terrified. He tried to grab me but I shot him. He freaked out and tried again, so I shot him again. He looked like a messed up mannequin when he was on the ground. It felt so unreal. I felt like I was going collapse from shaking so much. There was so much blood. Oh god there was so much goddamn blood, and the smell. It was so strange, It smelled like a jar of coins. People are calling me a hero for taking his brother down and maybe they’ll say the same thing about taking Tyler down too. But am I really a hero? What if they really didn’t want to hurt me like they said?. Am I just a cold blooded murderer?”* Diana began to cry uncontrollably but her parents refused to leave her side. *“Diana, you had no way of knowing if he was lying or telling the truth. He put you in a spot where you feared for your life. We don’t know what he’s done to you, but if he was willing to take you from me and your mother for so long, I don’t even want to think about what might have happened if you’d let him grab you again. You’re here because*

you chose to fight and we're so proud that you had the strength to make a choice no child should ever have to" Alex wiped the tears off Diana's face and she simply remained quiet. He walked with Diana back to her room and sat by her bedside till she fell asleep.

In the morning the three of sat together to eat breakfast and Alex turned to Diana. "*Diana. You need to tell the police everything that happened okay? It's the right thing to do."* Diana looked away in shame but nodded in agreement and Alex excused himself to make the call. *"Oh! hello Alex, what's going on?"* Greg's voice answered. *"It's time Greg. But I think you should interview her here. Might go easier here with someone she knows rather than a new person in PD."* On the other side of the line in the PD Greg nodded his approval as if Alex could see him. *"Hmm….that actually might work. Alright, I'll talk to her and I'll have a detective with me who will just listen. See you in a few"* the call ended and in a few minutes Greg arrived with the detective. The two of them met Diana in her room and pulled up chairs to talk to her. Before this moment the PD had been unsuccessful at getting a word out of her about what had happened. From the time she was found a week ago they had tried and failed three times to learn anything from her but Greg was a friendly face. He had spent the past week checking in on the family and started trying to teach Diana things she didn't get to learn while missing by giving her the best lessons he could for about an hour everyday. *"Having you been studying Diana? Have you been alright"* he opened with and she nodded. *"Alright, good. Well, you know why we're here already. We know part of the story so far, we know you fought with Dean and he died, we know that one of you drove the boat to McCarthy. But what about everything that happened before all this? Were him and his brother involved with taking you?"* Diana let a sighed and calmly answered. *"Yes, when they first took me it was Tyler who snatched me onto his boat. They were so fast I didn't have time to scream. They took me to a house in the woods where they'd make me…."* Diana stopped mid sentence as she started to stutter from nerves. She went quiet and Greg spoke to her softly to try to ease her. *"Alright...alright, we can skip that detail for now if you're too scared. Do you know where Tyler could possibly be now?"* Diana shook her head. *"What happens if he was killed too?" S*he replied. *"Well there's a thing called self defense in the law. If you felt liked Tyler was going to harm you or kill you then you had a right to protect yourself. Is that what happened Diana?"* Greg asked her. She began to tell him as she got choked up crying. *"Yes! I ran away from his stupid house, I took his gun with me and he found me after only a few hours maybe. He tried to grab me but I shot him twice. Did he really deserve that? Did I do the wrong thing?"* Diana continued to cry and Greg carefully consoled her. *"Look, let me tell you something, these things happen. A couple years ago I was forced to shoot a drug dealer who pulled a gun on me. I could have easily died that day, but that doesn't mean I feel good about having to end A life. Even though he could have killed me and I was legally in the right, I still feel guilt about it even ten years later. Tyler made it his life or yours and now we have Diana instead of scumbag Tyler."* Diana simply nodded in response. The detective took down notes as Diana and Greg had a momentary silence. She took a deep breath, wiped her tears away and began to speak unprompted. *"When I was in that shitty house there was a third person too. He was their dad. I don't know what he's doing now but It can't be good. There were*

two other girls who who had to stay in different rooms from me. We weren't allowed talk to each other. After about three years the first girl who looked oldest was taken outside by Dean and I never saw her again. The dad called her used goods, and only a year later they did the same thing with the other girl" Diana started to shake from nerves and her breathing became heavy. *"I...I can only assume... they did the same things to them as they did to....to me. I think.."* She stopped her sentence and Greg gave her a worried look. "Okay okay, breathe a bit alright? Just tell us what you feel comfortable with for now. We can take a break if you need to" Diana shook her head. *"No. The dad's name is Andrew. He's a disgusting rich prick who would constantly tell me that he's well connected and could get out of any trouble. The house is deep in the woods of the Wrangell St Elias. From what I overheard them say, the house was built illegally. It's not near anything and it kinda blends in to the area. I didn't get to see the outside of it much, but when I left one side had a fallen tree leaning on it. They always covered the windows with either black out blinds or some kinda cardboard I think."* Greg nodded and for several minutes Diana continued to give as much information about the house as she could. After they ended she spent the rest of the day relaxing with her parents and studying.

From the information Diana had told Greg, the police were able to easily find more information about Andrew in their records. Sure enough he had a rap sheet as large as his sons. But many of his crimes had disturbingly lenient sentences. Not knowing what they could be getting into the PD had to tread carefully. They started by hiring a drone operator to search the woods and after a few days they managed to locate the house. Luckily, since the house was illegally built in a national park they wouldn't require a search warrant. But unluckily actually getting there to continue the investigation was going tricky. With no roads leading directly to the house and very little information about it's occupants other then Andrew, the police would be going into a risky remote area blind with a possibility of encountering armed guards protecting Andrew. For the first few days after the house had been discovered the PD was stumped on how to proceed. Until something changed unexpectedly after a warrant for Andrew's arrest was put out and made public. The media and police departments across the state came out of the woodworks to inquire about Andrew's warrant. It turned out Andrew, just like his sons wasn't exactly a hit in other towns too. After a few days of discussing a plan of action with other towns they agreed to help the PD raid Andrew's house.

In the days leading up to the raid the media had reported on Tyler's death and Diana's story about the fight with the shotgun brothers. The news spread quickly and made Diana famous overnight with social media posts not only from all over the state but all over the country. Because of this several feminist and woman's support groups pledged to contribute to Diana's legal expenses once Andrew was caught. The groups also helped Diana's parents find better educational resources to help her get caught up to speed so she could eventually start going to an actual school. The family had been given new opportunities to help them grow and heal but unfortunately their struggles were far from over.

Chapter 3: Andrew's House.

Far deep in the woods Andrew lazed around on the couch and puffed his cigarette while he absently watched TV in the filthy living room. He hadn't left

the house since the news of Dean's death or turned on the news for days. Instead of weeping for his dead son, his only concern was what the investigation of the boat and Diana will reveal about his activity. He contemplated his plan to leave the state and start over but his entire thought process was interrupted by a picture on the news. He saw his own face. His heart sank when he saw the news that there had been a warrant over for several days now, his head and only granted a temporary relief when seeing Diana's face on TV. For a second it reminded him of his time with her and he looked back at it fondly. But reality set in for him soon. With the warrant over his head he could no longer try to leave the state without being flagged down and arrested at the border to Canada. Airports where no longer an option either. Andrew realized that he'd been cornered right under his nose and screamed at his two body guards to come up with a better plan. But they had nothing. All he could think do was to destroy evidence, but finding something to burn it with sent him frantically searching all over the house as he instructed his guards to help him look. In their frenzy they failed to notice the commotion outside.

The front door of the house violently burst open and in a split second the bodyguard raised his gun. He was dead before he could even register what was going on. In an instant the officers shot back at him and made their way further into the house. As the they searched the house the second bodyguard was blocked from going to Andrew in the bedroom by police. With all the guns pointed at him the second bodyguard was caught by surprise surrendered immediately. The police, guns drawn, searched every nook and cranny of the house but couldn't find Andrew. But nobody searched harder then Greg. As another officer joined Greg in searching the bedroom. Greg quieted his breathing to try and hear even the slightest sounds. He knew a gun did not mean he was safe and his eyes carefully scanned the room with his colleague doing the same. His tricks paid off and a slight pin drop shuffle from the closet drew their attention. They violently yanked open the closet door and poorly hidden under blankets was Andrew. With his firearm in his hand Greg yelled at him "PD, HANDS WHERE I CAN SEE THEM" Andrew had no room to bargain and surrendered immediately. As the other officer put Andrew in handcuffs, Greg looked around the rest of the room carefully. On the room's desk was a sight that shocked Greg so badly he couldn't think straight. An indescribable anger turned him beet red and his fist landed on Andrew's head without hesitation. Andrew was knocked out and the other officer in the room had to hold back Greg's wraith and prevent him from hitting Andrew again. *"YOU FUCKING SCUMBAG! YOU FUCKING SCUMBAG! THEY'RE JUST KIDS, THEY'RE JUST GODDAMN KIDS!"* As they heard the yelling the other officers rushed into the room and helped pull Greg out of the room and away from Andrew. He was completely rabid, he fought tooth and nail to resist being removed, he started screaming like a maniac. "JUST KILL HIM! JUST FUCKING KILL HIM!" They were confused at first but after looking at what was on the desk the couldn't really blame him to for losing his cool. Picture after picture of Diana, Dean, Tyler and two other girls at various different ages being abused by Andrew. Some even were of Dean and Tyler being abused by Andrew. The shock of the discovery made every officer in the room take a pause. One cried, One seethed heavy in anger, one threw up and the officer that had been holding Greg back from his target fought the desire to just

let Greg loose on Andrew.

The police removed Andrew and the remaining body guard from the house. As more police arrived Greg was instructed to wait outside. Unfortunately the discovery was far from the only horror they would encounter. In searching for evidence around the house they found more vile pictures, sex toys, drugs of all kinds, and disturbing children's clothes. But horrifyingly that wasn't even the worst discovery. When the police dogs arrived they found the two other girls that Diana had mentioned. They had been buried in shallow graves as if they were nothing and discarded like trash. Andrew had not only tormented them but denied them the peaceful and safe life they deserved for his own amusement. After taking all the evidence in and getting Andrew and his bodyguard into custody the police left the house of horrors behind.

Greg remained silent the whole way back as the vile pictures invaded his mind repeatedly. Unseen photos of Diana in fear and agony where juxtaposed with Greg's memories of Diana. The sweet girl he knew before she was taken was replaced with a girl who had become skittish and shy and now he was cursed with knowing the horrifying reason why. He understood now why she was so hesitant to speak and why she would act strange during lessons or while being interviewed. In his head he saw how happy she looked learning things with him and talking to her parents and he broke down. The pain of it was too much but he was grateful he'd been spared seeing the other two girls that didn't survive Andrew.

The next day after he got off work, he headed over to do lessons for Diana again.

When He arrived at the house Diana had been peeking out the window to see him as he walked in. *"Greg!"* Diana called to him. *"Do you think you get me anything for boxing training or any good exercise equipment?".* Greg looked at Diana as if she had three eyes*. "Boxing training? Exercise equipment?"* Diana happily nodded at his reply. *"Yes! Yes! I'm very strong you know! Sometimes I do laps around the neighborhood and lift heavy rocks to try to keep my strength up, just like when I was in the woods. But now I get real food, and sleep on my actual bed! Oh! Oh! Also look at this! POW!".* Diana flexed her muscles to show off to Greg who smiled and gently laughed with her at her excitement. *"Well you definitely look tougher than I did at sixteen that's for sure. I don't have any boxing things but can I send you some of my old exercise equipment. Lord knows I haven't used that in awhile."* Diana laughed and thanked Greg. He nodded in reply and sat down at the small dining room table. *"Well Diana, it's probably best if we continue off with a little more practice in English skills, lets start with…"* he began but was cutoff. *"You were in the raid right?"* Diana suddenly asked him. Greg froze up the second the words were uttered. He had prayed ever since the raid ended that he wouldn't have to talk about or think about it for awhile. He was sure the sleepless night the horrors had given him were only the first of many. He stared down at the floor and weakly replied. *"Yeah…I was. Don't worry we got him. He's gonna face trial pretty soon."* Diana shrieked in excitement and gave Greg a big hug. But his dead defeated expression remained the same. Diana's excitement changed to concern when she saw the look on Greg's face. *"If you guys won and he's going to jail what's with the look? Greg? What happened?"* Alex shut off the TV and decided to intervene in the conversation

he'd been overhearing from the living room. Alex placed his hand on Diana's shoulder and spoke to her gently. *"He could be shaken up from the raid Diana. It might be better not to pry."* She turned to her father with a confused look. *"Don't worry about it, just study for now alright? I'll look for boxing training stuff online and we can go to Greg's later to see the exercise equipment. Sound good?"* Diana nodded and began going over English again with Greg. Their usual study session played out like normal and after it was over he said his goodbyes to the family and walked out the door. But when he got in his car he changed completely.

With no in one in sight Greg lost his cool. With the stress of the raid and what he had seen he sat in his car a bawled like a baby. The pain of it all was suffocating him and he pleaded to know why such in awful thing could happen, especially to a girl so friendly and full of life. Greg remembered meeting Alex and Sofia when they'd first moved into the neighborhood and being over the moon in hearing they would be having a daughter just like he had. The horrors that invaded his mind played again and again and locked him into place in his car. He couldn't will himself to move or even start the car. The things he had seen during the raid consumed all his thoughts until he was snapped back into place by a knock at the window. "Greg? You alright in there?" Alex called out to him. Greg gently open the door too look at Alex he stared blankly at him. *"I'm so sorry, oh god I'm so sorry, I'm sorry..."* Greg kept repeating the same thing incessantly. Alex looked at him as if he had three eyes and asked. *"What's going on man? Sorry for what?"* But Greg shook his head. *"You've been a good friend to me Alex, but from one father to another I could never make you suffer with knowing what I saw in that evil fucking house."* Greg began to cry again, this time being unconcerned with being seen. *"Look why don't you join us for dinner tonight instead of going home to an empty house?"* Alex asked him. Greg lived by himself in a small house, his wife had passed many years ago from illness and his daughter had gotten married and moved away. Greg gave a sigh and nodded. They made their way back into the house and after a little while had dinner. Greg stuck around and talked with the family for a little until he calmed down and headed home.

Chapter 4: Diana vs Andrew.

Andrew sat in his jail cell and remained silent in the morning after the raid, despite his belief that he had good lawyers by his side not one answered his calls. He had been finally cut off from all his sketchy contacts but despite the pleading of the townspeople, his criminal history and the mountain of charges he was facing he somehow wasn't denied bail. It was a high bail but he'd been easily able to pay it and after only night sitting in a cell he walked out in the middle a freeman until he had to go back for trial. Despite being free, his face and his crimes all over the news meant the townspeople would likely crucify him if they saw him, and he walked around town aimlessly with his head low for the rest of the day.

The day after, Diana and her parents went to her aunt and uncle's house. It turned out Her uncle Jacob had just the kinda of boxing equipment she had been hoping to find. So being that everyone had free time that day they decided to spend some together at Evelyn and Jacobs house. The family had a nice peaceful day together. Evelyn prepared a large breakfast when they arrived, they ate, did

Some catching up about life and discussed where to send Diana for high school. Jacob trained Diana to box and they laughed together when Diana nearly sent her poor old uncle flying. Jacob had loved the sport when he was younger and wasted no time going on about everything he knew while Diana hung onto every word he said. After awhile Jacob got exhausted and retired to the living room. Diana was still full of energy however so she went to the front yard to do some running in the neighborhood.

This is when the day changed. Despite her mother Sophia watching her from the window like a hawk her eyes couldn't see everything. A car that had been hard to make out stopped om front of Diana just out of her mother's view and hid from Diana. As she continued her run on the sidewalk she was suddenly grabbed by her arm. Letting out a loud gasp she turned to the last person she had ever wanted to see, Andrew. He was a vile looking man from head to toe. Crooked corn yellow teeth from decades of cigarettes and patches of awful gray hair make the reek of his breath even worse. He pointed a small pocket knife at her face. *"No more cat and mouse, get in the car Diana."* he angrily whispered. She was frozen in place but started to notice Andrew's appearance more. The hand that held the knife in her face was shaking and the one that held her shoulder had a loose grip. Andrew's entire body trembled and the deterioration of old age was clear as day. With her nerves rattled like crazy and seeing Andrew's condition, Diana choose to take a risk. She quickly backed away and tore herself easily from his grip nearly missing Andrew's strike with his knife, she used every once of force she could muster to try and hit the knife from out of his hand but his grip remained as he recoiled. He swung at he again but she had been wise to back off. Now out of his grasp she ran the opposite direction towards the house. He chased her into the street and in the view of her mother who screamed when she saw him. Her mother's scream gave Diana the distraction she needed to pick up and toss a nearby rock and with luck it slammed right into the side of his head. The shock to his head cause him drop his knife. Diana lunged at him sending her full weight on him and slamming him to the floor the right before he could pick his knife back up. She began to whale on him punching his head on the cold pavement until he slowly began to get back up. She swiped the knife before he could finish getting up and jammed it into his stomach. She screamed in rage, he screamed in pain. He put both hands on his wound and painted them in crimson. He was out of commission, dazed and bleeding. Diana only watched him struggle to keep standing. He slowly stumbled to his car. But froze when he heard a terrifying click. Jacob stood in the street, with his 12 gauge in Andrew's direction. From behind Diana could hear her mother crying like crazy and her father going into in a panic. *"GIVE ME A SINGLE REASON WHY I SHOULDN'T SEND YOU SIX FEET UNDER RIGHT NOW"* Jacob shouted at Andrew. Diana's parents reached her and as they reunited they watched the confrontation. *"Oh god, Jacob please! Don't throw away your life for him!"* Evelyn begged him. Jacob took a deep breath but his gun remained fixed on Andrew. "O*n the floor! Now!*" Andrew did as he was told and Evelyn called the police.

Because of the police's suspicions, they already had an officer nearby before the incident. Although he was allowed bail by the judge, the police were not so charitable towards a man like Andrew. Instead of two and half hours the

police got there in ten minutes. They gave Andrew first aid and took him to a hospital. He was lucky that Diana missed any vital organs but he still spent a few days before trial in the hospital.

The days after Andrew's attack Diana's parents watched her like a hawk and even during the night the two of them would be waken from their sleep by a gut wrenching paranoia that would send them repeatedly to Diana's room for relief. When George had heard what happened the other officers had to stop him from going over the hospital to confront Andrew himself. He had a massive mental breakdown and screamed and yelled at coworkers to the point where the chief suspended him for a week to relax. Everyone in Diana's corner was shaken up, Except for Diana herself.

In the hospital Andrew was watched constantly by police. He couldn't so much as move an inch without their permission. All he could do was sit around and wait to heal and start his trial. But an interesting letter found its way to him a day before he would begin his day of trail.

"Andrew, maybe you finally understand how much it sucks being trapped. But soon you will trapped much longer then I was. You are the most vile human to ever exist and simply saying that your birth was a mistake wouldn't even do it justice. The deaths of your two vile subhuman sons is the trade off for the innocent girls who lives you denied. The two girls you never let me talk to. The used goods as you called them. They never escaped you in time and In their memory, I will make the rest of your life a living hell. You tried one last time to take me again because you are a brainless disgusting man fueled only by rage and lust, but I'm not that helpless little girl anyone. I've become stronger then you in every conceivable way, my mind grows sharper with age and my body continues to become more powerful and fortified, while few brain cells you did have wither away along with your body that's slowly being torn apart by age. You can no longer do anything to me and you stupidly gave me the perfect chance to prove it. Enjoy the stab wound asshole, I hope you die from it. ~Send just to torment you: Diana"